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A Brief Synopsis of Theonomy

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Moral antinomianism, and here we are kind of in between these two things, legalism on the one hand and moral relativism on the other. On the legalistic side, I think you know very well that one of the things we stand for as Protestants and those who hold to Reformed theology, is we stand for the purity of the gospel of God's grace over against the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church has for years exercised a kind of tyranny over the souls of men, teaching that men must be worthy of the grace of God, they must merit the merits of Christ, and that though their pre-baptismal sins may be washed away at baptism through the exercise and dispensing of the grace of God that's under the control of the church, after that point it is necessary that we join with Jesus in doing the work of satisfying God's justice, and in that sense, earning the grace of God that we have and this is horrible soul-damning teaching. I do not say that because I have some kind of party spirit about me, I say that for one reason alone and that's that I love the Lord Jesus Christ and will take nothing away from him in terms of what he has accomplished for my salvation. I will not take away the assurance of my salvation that he has granted me by his Spirit by thinking that in some way I've got to work with him toward my salvation. That is, simply put, legalism. It is the idea that God expects me to do something good that will merit his favor or continue his favor toward me.

You know, as well, that we as Christians as we try to send the gospel to the people of our nation round about, to our families, to our neighborhoods, to our acquaintances, are running up against competition increasingly from the cults, from those that would claim the name of Christ, claim to be even purer than the Protestant church, and yet what they teach is that people must do so much good so that they would be worthy of God's love and favor. The cults are legalistic. Roman Catholicism is legalistic. But you know the problem is much deeper than that because, if I could put it simply to you, you scratch an unbeliever, you will find a legalist because under the skin everyone in their natural pride expects that if God is going to save people, he's going to do so on the basis of our doing so much good that it counterbalances the evil that we have done, that somehow is the temptation of Satan that is placed into every man and woman's mind. Now there will be many who will say that they don't have to worry about there being a God, they dismiss his existence and so forth, but those who believe that God exists and that they will answer to him, if they do not know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, are naturally legalistic. They believe that their merit and their accomplishment is going to be what gets them ahead with God.

And so here you have legalism on the one hand, and we come to the question what is the Christian's relationship to the law of God and we must be very very careful that we do not fall into that pit, that horrible, self-damning, theologically heretical pit of legalism. But you know, backing away from the legalistic threat, we mustn't fall into the opposite problem of moral relativism. We find the relativistic approach to living in this world all around us and very threatening as well. In the first place, in the world. We have the threat of secular hedonism. Hedonism is kind of a fancy philosophical word, it simply means to live for pleasure and say that pleasure is the highest good. But what are we here for? Well, it's kind of like the old, like I think it's old, it's not on tv anymore as far as I know, a commercial that says you only go around once in life so grab for all the gusto you can get. That's the hedonist and that is what is being taught in the schools of our land and I don't mean simply taught by those who go to parties, taught as we're indirectly by the lifestyle, that is what's being taught in the classroom, that people live for their own happiness and pleasure, and so the most important thing for you to decide is what makes you feel good. Hedonism, secular hedonism, and obviously what makes one man feel good is not what makes another man feel good so on a hedonistic basis there are no moral absolutes, there's no universal right or wrong, it's just different strokes for different folks.

Where does this lead to? It leads to the epidemic of abortion. It leads to the sexual perversion of homosexuality and child pornography. It leads to all sorts of things which, as it turns out, don't end up giving people happiness anyway. It's that self-destructive, satanic delusion that if you live for yourself then you can become happy. Let me tell you, you live for yourself, you will not gain happiness. The only way you can do this is by putting number one at the top of the list the kingdom of God. Jesus says if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then all these other things of life, our food and our clothing and the gladness of heart will be added to us but the secular hedonist doesn't understand that.

But, you know, the problem is not just in the world, the problem is in the church. There is a pervasive antinomianism in the church. Antinomianism simply means an attitude that is against the law. An antinomianism that says, "We don't live by a written code of right and wrong, we live by the promptings of the Holy Spirit." An antinomianism that says that it isn't important whether we live righteous lives at all because Jesus is our Savior and that's all that counts, and so since he's our Savior, we can go and live like hell and somehow still go to heaven. An antinomianism that teaches that even if we are to live lives that are pleasing to God, we don't have to worry about what the Old Testament law says to us because that was back then and there, this is here and now. Antinomianism in the church that creates moral confusion, that diminishes the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know why it does that, because Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." But you know, if we do not act like that, if we don't show the light of God in our lives, then we're just spreading more darkness. Jesus said, "Men will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." But if we teach an antinomian gospel, there won't be good works to see and our Father in heaven will not be glorified. The problem isn't just secular hedonism, it's antinomianism in the church. Antinomianism leads to such aberrations and Jimmy Swaggert, you know, and I didn't come tonight to pick on one particular individual but since that's out there and I'll bet your nose has been punched with that

embarrassing example a few times since it's happened, we need to understand where that comes from. It comes from an attitude, it comes from a heretical attitude that doesn't understand the place of the law in the Christian life.

So tonight, avoiding legalism on the one hand and relativism on the other, what should be our attitude toward the law of God? According to the word of God, not according to any school of theology, not according to this writer or some other writer, I just want you to ask this question: what does the Bible say the role of the Mosaic law is in the life of the modern believer? I don't think we can arrive at a God-glorifying and a theologically faithful answer to that question if we don't begin right now to understand the complexity of the issue, that we don't take into account the fullness of the New Testament witness, and especially the diversity of ways in which the New Testament talks about the law of God.

Someone goes to the New Testament and wants to just be a proof-texter, and by that I'm not against proof-texting, I think we have to have an anchor to our theological convictions and that anchors the word of God, but proof-texters sometimes have a way of going to like one favorite thematic verse and ignoring all the rest for, you see, we're under grace, right, not under law? And so that answers all the questions, right? Wrong. It does not answer all the questions. We need to look at the complexity of the situation and so let's begin our study tonight by noting, first of all, that the New Testament in many places seems to advocate a positive, very positive attitude toward the Old Testament law.

In Romans 7:12, Paul affirms, "that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good." When Paul writes his epistles, you will notice over and over again he cites the Old Testament law as the authoritative warrant for his ethical judgments. 1 Corinthians 9, he says, "Doesn't the law say?" In Ephesians 6 when he tells children to obey their parents, "just as the law says." Paul doesn't seem to be embarrassed by going back to the Old Testament law to make these moral applications. In fact, in Romans 7:22, Paul's own personal testimony, here is this great apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ who wrote so much of the New Testament scripture, what was his attitude? He said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man. I'm not putting on a show. It's not just outward but from the heart, the inward man, I love this law. It's good."

James teaches his readers in chapter 2, verses 8 to 10, that they do well to fulfill the royal law. Indeed, he warns against breaking even the least point. He says if a man keeps the whole law, breaks the least one, he is guilty of all. And in chapter 4 of the epistle of James verses 11 and 12, he says it is not our place to be judges of the law, we are called by God to be doers of the law.

Paul says it, James says it, Peter says it. In chapter 1 of his first epistle, he calls on believers to sanctify holy living based upon the demand of the law. The law says you shall be holy and so you must do it. And John the apostle in his first epistle, chapter 2, identifies keeping the law with knowing God. He says those who claim to know God and don't keep the law are liars. In chapter 5 of his epistle, he says that keeping the law is the

standard of loving of our fellow man. Knowing God, loving our fellow man central to being Christians. John says that's tied to the law of God.

So there you have it. Paul says it. James says it. Peter says it. John says it. The law is good. The law is binding. The law is authoritative. In some way, whenever we come to it at the end of tonight's study, in some way we're going to have to argue that the law is indisputably upheld by the writers of the New Testament and I told you this is a complex and a confusing question. On the other hand, you can find passages in the New Testament that seem to speak equally plainly in a negative fashion about the law and clearly dismiss the law. Paul declares in Galatians 2:9 that he died unto the law that he might live unto God. Here living unto God stands opposed to the law. He had to die to the law that he might live unto God. Paul describes himself in 1 Corinthians 9:20 by saying that he is not under the law. In Romans 6:14, he says his readers are not under the law but under grace. In fact, in chapter 7 of Romans he says you have been discharged from the law. In Ephesians 2:15 he says Christ abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances. So in some way which is vital to the gospel message, the Old Testament law indisputably is opposed by the writers of the New Testament.

What do we do with this? Have the law upheld? Clearly, definitively, almost universally upheld by all the writers of the New Testament and then you have these other statements that say the law is to be dismissed, that we must die to it and all the rest. How do we bring all this together? There are probably many ways to explain how to do it but I have found the easiest way to understand it is by turning in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 1. Would you do that with me tonight? 1 Timothy 1 and there I'd like to read the eighth verse for you. 1 Timothy 1:8, the Apostle Paul says, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully." But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully. Paul gives this clear declaration, he says it's something we take for granted as Christians that the law is good. I wish the Apostle Paul lived in our day to kind of remind Christians of that. He says we know the law is good, shouldn't be any doubt about that.

How do you think the Apostle Paul would respond if he were put in the position which Dr. Bahnsen and many others are very often put in of saying that the law of God is binding on our behavior today, and then people says, "Oh, you mean to say we have to do that? Do you see how harsh that was in the Old Testament? Isn't that awkward? Isn't that horrible? Isn't that weird? Isn't that not the way we usually do things?" And no one stands up and just, you know, well, some do, not everyone stands up and harangues just like that but that's the direction. It's kind of like, "What? We would do what's written back here?" Paul's answer is, "Look, we know the law is good, there's no doubt about that. If you don't see the goodness of the law, guess what? There's something wrong with you. There's no something wrong with God, not something wrong with his holy righteous law, there's something wrong with you, there's something wrong with your culture." Paul says we know that the law is good. There shouldn't be any doubt about the goodness of the law because, you see, the ethical demands of the law reflect nothing less than the very holiness and righteousness and goodness of God himself.

In Romans 7:14, Paul said we know that the law is spiritual. He doesn't mean by that that the law is disembodied, he means that the law is of the Holy Spirit. We know that it is spiritual. And in Romans 8:4 and 7, he says that those who walk after the Spirit will indeed fulfill the ordinance of the law, but on the other hand, the mind of the sinful nature is enmity against God because it is not subject to the law of God. Do you see that contrast? Those who are spiritual have the mind of the Spirit, they rejoice after the inward man and the law of God and fulfill the ordinance of the law, but those who are in the flesh, those who have the sinful nature cannot be subject to the law of God and they cannot please God.

So when people have problems with the dictates of God's law, then we must in a compassionate but firm pastoral way say, you must ask, "Brother or sister, do you walk by the Spirit or by the flesh?" Because it's characteristic of the flesh, of the sinful nature of the natural man, characteristic of him to reject the things of the Spirit and to find the law hard to keep and unworthy of keeping for the spiritual man loves the law for the inward man wishes to keep it. The law is a transcript of God's character and so the way I respond to the law is, in a sense, the way I respond to God. And so if I find something in the law ludicrous, what I'm saying is I find God ludicrous. If I find something in the law harsh, what I'm saying is I find God harsh.

So Paul says we know that the law is good, however, the goodness of the law in 1 Timothy 1:8, the goodness of the law, Paul says, is sullied, it is besmirched, it is canceled if it is used in a way that God never intended for the law to be used. So what Paul says is we know that the law is good if a man uses it lawfully. Isn't that interesting? Lawfully. The law tells us how to keep the law. The law tells us how we should look upon the law. The law must be used according to its own character. It must be used as God intended it to be used. It must be used according to its own direction. And what that suggests then is that it's possible to go to the law of God and misuse it. It may sound kind of funny but it's possible to have an unlawful use of the law of God. It's possible to uphold the law in such a way that you actually violate the law itself.

So the law can be perverted into something that's against its own nature and when it is perverted it becomes not something good but something ungodly, not something good but something evil, and that kind of abuse of God's good law is openly repudiated, repeatedly condemned in the pages of the New Testament. So the way to resolve this apparent conflict between some verses of the New Testament upholding the law, some verses of the New Testament repudiating the law is by recognizing that the law in its proper use and intent is upheld, the law abused and perverted is rejected.

So that just leaves one question and we can go home tonight. No, actually I'm going to keep you here longer than that. The one question is: what is the unlawful, abusive, perverse use of the law that Paul would condemn and that the rest of the New Testament condemns? Very simply put we find that unlawful use of the law in the attitude of the Pharisees and in the attitude of the Judaizers and what they had in common, the Pharisees and the Judaizers, is that they promoted self-merit before God through the works of the law. It was incredible pride, indeed, spiritual self-deception that caused the Jews to rest

upon the law, Paul says in Romans 2, they rested upon the law being confident that they possessed, he says, in the law the form of knowledge and that they could be, then, self-righteous teachers of others. Here is the Jewish attitude, the Pharisees and the Judaizers both show it, the law, you see, is my pride and joy. I know the law. I keep the law. God must be so pleased with me. You almost see them kissing themselves in the mirror, "Aren't I wonderful?" When in fact, those who glory in the law, Paul says, were notoriously guilty of transgressing it, those who claimed to honor the law ended up dishonoring God, the law-giver. Remember how Jesus says in Luke, the 16th chapter, that the Pharisees were infatuated with justifying themselves before men. In Luke 18 he said they trust in themselves that they are indeed righteous. In Matthew 9 he says they think they no more need a Savior than a healthy man needs a physician. That's what you need to get ahold of, this blatant self-righteous pride in the law that was seen among so many Jews.

The Bible says, Matthew 23, you go home and read that tonight. You want to be humbled, you think you've got something going for you, you've got the same problem as the Pharisees. You read Matthew 23 tonight. There Jesus excoriates the Pharisees. He says, "You are like whited sepulchres," which is a dreadful image but you have to understand for the Jews according to the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, to touch a dead body was to be defiled in the eyes of God. He says, "That's what you are, defiled." However do you know what you do with a sepulchre so that people won't touch it and won't come in contact with a dead body? You paint it white, although the idea there probably is more white is very visible and so avoidable. It has the idea also of purity in there. On the outside, he says, you're so white and clean. What's inside the sepulchre? Dead men's bones and that's you, Jesus said, outwardly you look righteous, inwardly you are spiritually dead, Matthew 23. Or as Paul puts it in Romans, the 10th chapter, seeking to establish their own righteousness the Jews could not then submit to the righteousness of God, Romans 10:3.

Now in the earliest days of the Christian church, there arose a party among the Pharisees coming from the Pharisees, pardon me, a party within the church which would not abandon this perverse and unlawful use of the law of God nor would they recognize that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ had put out of gear that portion of the law that foreshadowed his person and work. These were called Judaizers. Let's understand something about the Judaizers: they did not teach you have to keep the law and be circumcised instead of believing in Jesus. No, it was much more perverse. They said, "Of course, we have to believe in Jesus. He is the Savior. He is the Messiah. But you can't stop being a Jew so you must believe in Jesus and keep the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament." So you must have Jesus plus circumcision, Jesus plus the ritual feasts of the Old Testament, and so that imposition of a Jewish lifestyle, of a Jewish religious culture, if we could put it that way, upon people was called to Judaize. To Judaize means to require people to live like Jews.

We see that in Galatians 2:14. The Judaizers insisted Gentiles cannot be saved if they don't keep the covenantal distinctives of the Mosaic law, and by distinctives I mean that which sets the Mosaic economy off because of things like circumcision, animal sacrifice,

which was troublesome, of course, what do you do with that? But keeping the feasts and other sorts of things that outwardly show that you're a Jew. Basically what they were saying is grace needs to be supplemented by works and the works that supplement it are the works of the ceremonial law. Now Paul was no stranger to the attitude of the Pharisees and to that of the Judaizers. He understood their approach to the law of Moses because it had been his own. He says so. Read Philippians 3, it says he was brought up as a Pharisee concerning the law. He knew what they believed. He knew what they practiced. He said he was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, Acts 22:3. His testimony in Galatians 1 is that he "advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the tradition of my fathers."

So Paul knew what it was to make his boast in the law and from the perspective of a man who was spiritually dead, Paul once claimed that as to the righteousness under the law he was blameless, Philippians 3:6. Paul knew that deadly spiritual pride and self-righteousness. Apart from a true perception of what the law taught, being self-deceived, Paul thought that he was spiritually alive and he was righteous. It was only when the Holy Spirit, you see, came and convicted his heart and killed his self-righteous complacency that the commandment of God came home to his consciousness and he understood what it was all about. Romans 7:9, "I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Then I knew that I had no hope."

Here's something really remarkable, something that theologians miss repeatedly and should not if they would understand correctly the intention of God in the Old Testament law. Paul knew from his own personal experience that he needed to die to legalism, that he needed to die to using the law as a way of justifying himself before God, and now here's the \$64,000 question: how did he find out? How did Paul learn to put away legalism? Turn in your Bibles to Galatians 2:19. What is it that taught Paul not to trust the law for his salvation? Galatians 2:19 Paul says, "I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God." How did Paul learn to live unto God? How did Paul learn to put away legalism, self-righteousness, pride and merit before God? He learned it in the law. Isn't that wonderful? He learned it in the law. We know the law is good if a man uses it lawfully. He says, "I wasn't using it lawfully and finally God woke me up." He said, "'Paul, look at what the law actually teaches,' and when he did that, I put legalism away and began to live unto God."

"I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God." Let me tell you what this is all about in our day and age. We have many in the Christian church that will tell you that the Old Testament law taught salvation by works, that the Old Testament law held out at least hypothetically the idea that if you keep the whole law, you can be saved before God. But then when we come to the New Testament, they say Jesus put all that away. He put away the law and he introduced grace instead. So in the Old Testament you have law held out as the way of salvation, to put it simply, and in the New Testament you have grace. Paul says, "That isn't true. Through the law I learned not to trust the law for salvation." It was the law itself that taught Paul not to seek his righteousness before God in his own law works and so we have to conclude, don't we, that the Old Testament law

as never legalistic, never in its intention did it hold out self-righteousness and merit before God through our own accomplishments and works.

How did the Jews get it so wrong? Well, they perverted the law to a self-serving end. The law became for them their pride before the nations, their pride before the Gentiles, and within their own community. The person, you see, who specialized in law was a man who was not humble before the law but a man who exalted himself. Do you remember the story of how the publican goes in to pray and there there's the Pharisee and the Pharisee lifts his, you know, eyes to heaven and says, "God, I bet you're so happy that I'm with you because, you know, I do all these things. I'm just such a great guy. Hm, I just love me." And the publican, on the other hand, wouldn't so much lift his eyes to heaven and smote himself upon his breast and said, "God, God, be merciful to me. I'm a sinner." That's what's wrong is when people take the law and turn it into something that they can exalt themselves before God with.

So in Romans 10:4, Paul says that the Jews did not see that Christ is the aim of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, that the law always had this as what it was pointing to, the law always had this aim and purpose, Christ as the way of righteousness. Paul lamented in 2 Corinthians 3 that until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. Paul very clearly categorized and included the Mosaic, they're from the commonwealth of Israel, and you were so by the covenants of the promise. Now what covenants in the Old Testament separated Jew from Gentile? Well, the Abrahamic covenant did and the Mosaic covenant did, in fact, so clearly did the Mosaic covenant do it that it had built right into it certain pedagogical and symbolic ritual laws to remind the Jews that they were to be separate from the Gentiles so that they don't eat pork, they don't eat unclean meats, they don't mingle seed in their fields, they don't mingle cloth in their clothes or different kind of fibers in their clothes. These laws of separation is a constant ritual reminder, "You are not to be part of the Gentile world." The Mosaic law erected a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile and Paul says that that was a covenant of the promise.

God doesn't, excuse me, well, God doesn't but Paul doesn't look upon the Mosaic law, then, as a form of legalism. He looks at it as a form of grace and promise. The old covenant administration of law, that is, the Mosaic administration of the law of God, did not offer a way of salvation, did not teach a message of justification that differs from what we find in the new covenant. The way of salvation has always been one. God doesn't change his mind. He doesn't need to because he never makes any mistakes. Think about that. Do you know why you change your mind, why I change my mind? Because we blow it. We think we understand what's going on, this is what we're going to do and we find out through that cybernetic feedback process, "Oops, made a mistake. Got it wrong. Didn't anticipate all the factors." So we make alterations. Do you think God is like that? Of course not. He's glorious. He knows everything. He controls everything. He doesn't have to change his mind. God didn't lay down one way of salvation and some time later go, "Oops." He laid down a way of salvation which is the same way of salvation that we have today.

So you read in Psalm 143:2 that in God's sight no man can be justified. In Jeremiah 23:6 we learn that justification is grounded in Jehovah our righteousness. The old covenant itself bore witness that righteousness has to be imputed and we know that from the example of the great father of the faithful, Abraham. Think about this, when the New Testament wants to prove justification by faith, where does it go to prove it? It goes to the Old Testament, recites Genesis 15:6, and that's why the Old Testament is so full of examples that God's saints were men of faith. That's what Hebrews 11 tells us time after time after time, by faith they did the things they did.

So Paul came to understand very clearly that the old covenant itself taught that the just shall live by faith and in saying that, he's quoting Habakkuk 2:4. Or listen to Isaiah the prophet in chapter 45 of his prophecy, "In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified." Chapter 54, "This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah and their righteousness is from me saith Jehovah." So what I'm suggesting to you, brothers and sisters, is that if we let the Bible interpret itself, if we don't bring to the Bible some preconceived theological way of looking at this, if we don't bring some kind of tension that we have learned somewhere else between law and gospel, between old and new covenant, if we just let the Bible speak for itself we're compelled to come to the conclusion that the Mosaic administration, the Mosaic law understood in that broad sense as an administration of a covenant, the Mosaic administration was a covenant of grace. It offered salvation on the basis of grace through faith just as the New Testament does.

What's the difference between the Old Testament administration, the Mosaic law, and the New Testament administration? It's just this: the old covenant looked ahead to the coming Savior and administered the covenant by means of promises and prophecies, ritual ordinances, types and foreshadows of the Savior who would come and redeem us, but in the new covenant the gospel proclaims the accomplishment of that which the old covenant anticipated and now administers God's covenant not through all these ritual ordinances but through preaching and the sacraments. The substance of the covenant is the same in Old and New Testaments, the difference is the perspective and the pedagogy, the perspective looking ahead, looking back the pedagogy being animal sacrifices, types and foreshadows over against the declaration of the reality that has come and that's why the scripture never presents the Mosaic covenant as fundamentally opposed to the new covenant.

Paul asked the question in Galatians 3:21, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" When God gave the law through Moses, did that stand against the way of salvation by means of promise and faith that he had revealed to Abraham? Isn't it incredible? Paul asked the very questions that evangelical theologians get embroiled in. He says, "So then is the law against the promises of God?" And his answer, the Greek is "me ginomai" you'll find translated different ways. All of them capture part of it. It's an expression that means "may it never be." Absolutely not. God forbid. No way. Paul says, "Can't be. Forget it. Put it behind you. Me ginomai. Is the law against the promise? Never." The law was never intended to be a way of works righteousness.

So in Romans, the ninth chapter, Paul tells us that by her self-righteous effort to gain merit before God, by her effort to gain the favor of God through obedience to the law, Israel, he said, did not arrive at the law. As long as they tried to do that, they never got to it and why is that? You may want to write this down in your notes. This is crucial to show to your friends who have trouble with this belief. Romans 9:32. And why didn't Israel arrive at the law? "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works." It's right there. They didn't arrive at what the law was all about because they sought the righteousness of the law not by faith but through their own works. So if we would listen to the law itself, we would be warned away from any idea that God's law was intended to be a way of self-merit or justification before God. The graciousness of the new covenant that we enjoy is nothing more but the flowering, the unfolding, and the full realization of the promises and grace that were anticipated by the saints who lived under Moses and David and Jeremiah and Isaiah and all the rest and that's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20 however many may be the promises of God, they are in Christ affirmed and through him confirmed to the glory of God through us.

What do you think was the greatest Bible lesson of all time? Well, I guess you'd get different answers to that. For my money, it's found in Luke 24. I think the greatest Bible lesson of all time is when Jesus was on the road to Emmaus with these two followers who did not believe in his resurrection and the Bible says that he there beginning from Moses and from all the prophets and all the scriptures expounded the things concerning himself. Boy, what a sermon that was where Jesus is the preacher and he goes from the beginning to the end of the Old Testament, from Moses through all the prophets and what he shows them in all of the Old Testament is that it was talking about me. Indeed as Hebrews 3:5 says, "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, testifying of those things which would afterward be spoken." Moses was looking ahead and proclaiming the same gospel that we believe today.

So the Mosaic law does not stand in antithesis to the gospel of Christ, to the message of salvation by grace. Christ was the focus of the law and as such all the covenants of the Old Testament look forward to him. Paul insists that the Mosaic administration, therefore, did not annul the Abrahamic promise. In Galatians 3 he says it was rather added until the seed should come to whom the promise was made, that is, it was added until the coming of Christ. The Mosaic administration called the law that way of handling God's covenant of grace was given until Jesus should come. Before Christ, the object of our faith came, Paul says God's people were kept in custody under the law. The law, you see, was like penning us in and keeping us in custody, that is to say the law as he tells us in verse 24, was a tutor unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. The law served to instruct people about justification by faith looking ahead to Christ, the seed that would come.

Now what is it about the Mosaic administration of God's covenant that performed that function? What part of the Mosaic law taught justification by faith and pointed ahead to the coming of Jesus Christ? It's that portion of the law that we today call the ceremonial law. It was the redemptive rituals of the law that pointed ahead to Jesus. It was the redemptive rituals of the law that taught justification by faith. It was circumcision and

priesthood and temple and sacrifice that all taught that. As Colossians 2 says, they were shadows, you see, but the body is Christ, the reality is Christ. As Hebrews 7, 8, 9 and 10 says, they were the shadow of the good things to come.

So the tutor or the schoolmaster to which Paul alludes in the third chapter of Galatians was the Mosaic law as a covenantal administration and, in particular, the ceremonial foreshadows of Christ. Now how do I know that that's true? How can I prove that Paul was talking about the ceremonial law when he in Galatians said that the law was given until the seed should come? Well, in the first place, from the theological and historical context of the book. Paul was engaged in a controversy with whom? With the Judaizers who taught the insistence, taught and insisted upon circumcision as a way of salvation. We know in Galatians 4:10 when he chooses an example of the problem the Galatians are having, he says they go back to the ceremonial calendar of the Jewish law. We know this from Paul's vocabulary. He calls the law rudiments, the same Greek word that you find in Colossians 2:16 and 17, for those things that are a foreshadow of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. And we know it from the particular way in which he describes the law as a tutor unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. That is not accomplished by a commandment that says, "You shall not steal." There's no gospel in you shall not steal. There's no foreshadow of Jesus Christ, not in any obvious or primary way in you shall not steal. But in the high priesthood, in the temple cultus, in the animal sacrifices, there was a teaching of the need for God's grace and the coming Savior.

So when Paul speaks this way, we know that he's talking about the tutor of the ceremonial law, that which made the Mosaic administration distinctive. And what Paul says in Galatians 3:25 is we are no longer under this tutor. Praise God. You know, in many places I'm known for, I have a reputation, not always a good one with people, I have a reputation for upholding the Old Testament law and I want to make it very clear and I'm not just saying this for the sake of convenience, that if upholding the law meant that we went back to the Mosaic administration, I would curse it myself. I want nothing to do with the old covenant administration of God's grace. I do not want foreshadows, I want the real thing, okay? So Paul says we're not under the tutor anymore. Praise God we're not under the tutor of the law anymore and by that what he means is we're not under the ceremonial commandments of the Old Testament, we're not under the Mosaic administration of the way of grace.

So let me recapitulate what we have learned in what will be the first major point of our presentation tonight. We found that the old covenant itself teaches us to die to legalism, to die to self-merit by obeying the law. The old covenant taught as in the Abrahamic promise that we are to look ahead to Christ and learn justification by faith. We must never pit the gospel then against the law with respect to the way of salvation. And yet the gospel is more glorious than the Old Testament, far more glorious, and it supersedes the Mosaic administration with all the ceremonial foreshadows. We put that away and the gospel brings us the Savior himself. In the establishment of the new covenant, there is no change from the gracious character of salvation that was foreshadowed but there is a vanishing away of the foreshadows, and so Hebrews 8:13 says that there's a vanishing

away of the obsolete administration, Hebrews says that that is vanishing away, it's nigh unto expiration.

That just leaves one question then: how should we who are saved by grace live? The law does not teach legalism. Those who are saved by grace want to please God. How then should they live? I told you at the beginning of tonight's presentation that we have two great dangers to avoid. The one is legalism. I hope that I've slain that. I hope that you can see that as those who uphold the law, we do not uphold legalism, we uphold salvation by grace. What do we do now, however, about the hedonism of the world and the antinomianism of the church? A man by the name of Joseph Fletcher back in the 1960s wrote a book entitled "Situation Ethics." Actually Fletcher was just picking up on what Emil Brunner had taught in his book "The Divine Imperative," and what Fletcher taught and Christians by the thousands have imbibed is the idea that there can be no preestablished rules of morality, no universal principles of right and wrong. According to Fletcher, every individual situation in life is unique and so you cannot generalize about what is right or what is wrong, you cannot have anything in advance that prescribes how you should live your life. Each case is handled on its own under the vague notion of love. What he said is in every situation do what is most loving. It's what we call situation ethics. In philosophy it's called relativism, the idea that there is no absolute right and wrong and that everybody makes up his own mind as you go along. It's kind of like trying to decide how to bake a cake making up the recipe as you go. You practically cannot state in the form of a law anything that is morally relevant for all situations in life, Fletcher said. You cannot lay on others in advance any kind of obligation.

Now then what do we as Christians say about that? How do we answer situation ethics? How do we answer relativism? And I want to do something, I hope those of you who are aware of the debate going on in Christian circles today will appreciate, I'm going to tell you what evangelicals say about that. I'm not going to go and tell you what theonomy and Christian ethics says about that. You can read my books if you wish, I hope you do, but I'm not going to give you the theonomic answer, I'm just going to give you the evangelical answer to situation ethics, how we deal with that. And the reason I'm going to do that as I'm going to show you, that if you really understand evangelical theology, you have to be a theonomist. So let's let my fellow evangelical teachers answer the question and then you can judge the perspective that I've written in my book "Theonomy in Christian Ethics."

Evangelicals say there are moral absolutes and they fight against relativism and they fight against sensationalism and they say there are moral absolutes because we can find such in the character of God. And because the character of God is unchanging, the moral dictates laid down by God are unchanging. That's what evangelicals teach. In Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics, Millard Erickson who teaches at Bethel Theological Seminary, wrote these words. "These principles of morality carry the authority which they possess because they accord with the very nature of God." Elsewhere Erickson writes, "God is the Christian's ultimate authority. His will is therefore absolute, unqualified. God has spoken and the Bible is the written word of God carries this categorical authority. Within His word certain actions seem to be prescribed as always good while some are unequivocally

proscribed." Why is that? Because the laws of the Bible are grounded in the character of God. You see, God doesn't get up in the morning, as it were, flip a coin and say, "Okay, I think adultery will be wrong." He doesn't have to do that because when God tells us what's right and wrong he just looks at his own character and he says, "If you want to be like me, don't commit adultery. If you want to be like me, don't steal. If you want to be like me, don't blaspheme."

So evangelicals like Millard Erickson have made it very clear that the moral universal principles of ethics that we endorse as Christians are grounded in the character of God. Walter Kaiser teaches that Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in his torrid "A Theology of the Old Testament," wrote these words. "Consequently the standard of moral measurement in deciding what was right or wrong, good or evil, was fixed in the unwavering and impeccably holy character of Yahweh, Jehovah, Israel's God. His nature, attributes, character and qualities provided the measuring stick for all ethical decision." Then Kaiser writes about the Decalogue in Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics, "The Decalogue is part of the moral law of God. Since it is based on His nature and being it remains permanently valid for Christians as long as God is God." I like that. What God says in his law is permanently valid for Christians as long as he is God. Do you know why? Because the law simply reflects his character.

Or J. I. Packer to take one final example in a book entitled "Law, Morality and the Bible" writes, "God's call to be holy as He is holy is a general summons to live by His revealed precepts and prohibitions as embodying the loves and hates which make up His character and which His ways with us will always express."

Do you understand the significance of this? You don't have to be a theonomist, you don't have to be somebody who comes from some special narrow school of thought to understand this. The way in which we answer relativism, the way in which we counter the situationalism and the antinomianism in the church is by saying that what the Bible lays down for morality reflects the character of God, and since it reflects the character of God, it's absolute, it's unchanging because he is unchanging. You know, the evangelical answer that I have given to you here is right. That's what the Bible says.

In Romans 1, Paul tells us that all men are condemned for unrighteous behavior that violates, listen to this, that which is known of God, the invisible things of him, his everlasting power and divinity. Paul says all men know God and that's why they're condemned for their unrighteousness.

Scripture declares that God alone is holy. Scripture declares that God alone is good. And yet if you look at what Paul says, you'll see that he says the law is holy and the law is good. Well, if God alone is holy and good, how can the law be holy and good unless, what? The law is just the transcription of God's own character. God's law says we are to be holy even as God is holy. Leviticus 20:7-8, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy. 8 And you shall keep my statutes, and do them." How do we imitate the holiness of God? By keeping his statutes, obeying his commandments.

Often in the Old Testament, you will find a commandment backed up by God with the simple observation or explanation, "I am Jehovah your God." God will say, "Do such and such. Don't do such and such." Then he says, "I am Jehovah." What's the import of that combination? What he's saying is, "Because I am God, that's my character, you do it this way."

After expounding on the law's proper demands, Jesus concluded in Matthew, the fifth chapter, "Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." By keeping the law, we imitate the perfection of God.

Or in 1 John we read that we are to walk in the light because God is light. We read that we are to love because God is love. You see, Christian ethics is a matter of imitating God, it's a matter of bringing his character into expression in the created realm. It's a matter of being godly or being the image of God. And how do we find what God's character would require of us in our behavior, in our attitudes and our words? By looking at his commandments. His commandments show us his holy character and therefore since the character of God is unchanging and immutable, James 1:17 says that there is no variation in the character of God.

Malachi 3:6, God says, "I am the Lord. I change not." Since God's character is unchanging, then the law which reflects his character is likewise unchanging.

Psalms 89:34, God says, "My covenant I will not violate nor will I alter the utterance of my lips." What does this mean, then? This means that in terms of how we live in the world over against relativism, antinomianism, situation ethics, whatever you want to call it, we look to the character of God revealed in his law to find out how we are to obey and please him. Our moral absolutes are found in his law.

Deuteronomy 4:2, God forbids adding anything or subtracting anything from his law. Now if God forbids us to subtract anything from his law, then what right have we in the New Testament to say, "Oh, that was the Old Testament"? I mean, talk about subtracting. I mean, that's just like lopping off 2/3 of the Bible and saying, "Well, no, we don't have to do that anymore." God says, "I forbid you to do that. I'll be the one who decides what can be taken away and how can it be applied. You don't subtract anything from my law."

So how much of the Old Testament is binding if we let the New Testament speak to us? Would you mind if we take just a few minutes before I end tonight letting the New Testament answer that question? 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Our question: how much of the Old Testament is binding today. Paul says, "Every scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, furnished unto every good work." How much of the Old Testament is binding? Paul says every scripture. The Greek expression *graphé*, scripture, probably means every sentence, every writing.

But you know, we can be a little more exact. James 2:10. James says, "if a man keeps the whole law and yet violates one point, he is guilty of all." In that, James says every point of the law is binding. Every scripture, Paul says, James says, every point of the law.

But you know, that's not being exact enough either because in Matthew 4:4 Jesus says, "Man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Kind of see what I'm doing here? Every sentence of the Old Testament, indeed every law sentence of the Old Testament, indeed every word in the sentence in the Old Testament.

That's not enough either. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus puts it even stronger. Look at that with me, Matthew 5:18. You should remember that in this Jesus is answering the question what happens to the law now that he has come. In the 17th verse he says, "Don't think I've come to destroy the law or the prophets, I came not to destroy but to fulfill," and now listen to this, "for verily I say unto you until heaven and earth pass away not one jot or tittle shall in anywise pass away from the law until everything has been done." Not a jot or a tittle. What are jots and tittles? The jot was the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, yod. Very small.

And so Paul says not a sentence, not one scripture. James says not a command. Jesus says not a word, not a letter. Ah, but even that's not enough. Do you know what a tittle is? Tittle is a small, very small extension that's just part of the marking of one letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus has said not the smallest letter, yod, but now he says not even a part of a letter. The D and the R are distinguished by the fact that you write the D with just a small extension beyond the bar that makes the R, and that small extension is called a tittle. How much of the Old Testament is binding today? Every tittle. Every stroke of a pen, as the NIV puts it.

As you're turning in your Bibles, I'd like to say a little bit about Jesus as the Christ. You know, this is a central profession that we make as Christians. We follow Jesus as the Christ and so we are Christians. We believe that he is the anointed one of God. Christos is the Greek for the Hebrew for anointed, and the Hebrew for anointed gives us our English word Messiah. To say that Jesus is the Messiah is the same as saying Jesus is the Christ. He is the anointed one of God.

In the Old Testament, there were three offices in particular that were anointed by God. We know that prophets were anointed as they went about their task of declaring the word of God. And we know that priests were anointed as they entered into the service of God in the tabernacle or temple. And finally, we know that kings in Old Testament Israel were anointed as they took their throne to serve. And therefore in the history of Reformed theology, we have described the saving work of Jesus the Christ, the anointed one, as the work of being a prophet, a priest and a king.

My own personal feeling about what you see in evangelical theology as it's played out in the 20th century is that there seems to be a lively sense that Jesus came into this world to be a priest and to be a prophet. Jesus is our teacher. We listen to his word. We sit at his feet. We want to be instructed by him. And he is presently our prophet. We don't wait

until later to hear from Jesus. We don't listen to the words of men and then finally we come to Jesus, or someday he will be our prophet. He is right now our prophet. He came into this world as a prophet among men who was rejected but is now exalted and is listened to by his people, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we are instructed in his word. Jesus is the supreme prophet and he is so right now. And of course, in evangelical theology Jesus is a priest. He is the one who intercedes for us. He lay down his life as an atonement for sin and took it up again in the resurrection. He now is the great high priest who stands in the very presence of God for us, interceding day by day that we might be heard and that our sins might be atoned for and we might be saved. Evangelical theology understands that Jesus is now the priest. We don't wait for Jesus to be the priest. We are saved presently and he intercedes for us presently even as he is presently a prophet. Jesus, the prophet. Jesus, the priest. But then when we come to the third office of Jesus, the evangelical church is strangely inconsistent, sometimes tragically silent. Is Jesus our king? And the answer we get is: someday, maybe down the line a bit, when he returns he will be a king. Praise be to God that is not the teaching of his holy word. Jesus is not only presently our prophet and our priest, he is presently our king and not just our king but the king over all creation. Many people may not acknowledge that but, after all, there are people in the United States who don't acknowledge Bush as being the President either. The fact that they don't acknowledge it doesn't change the fact. There are people who have cancer who will not acknowledge that they have cancer but do you know what? They still have it. And so, yes, there are people who don't acknowledge this but Jesus is the king and we acknowledge that, we come and we sing his praise. Others may not join us in that but he is still the king and he's now the king. We're not waiting for him to become the king.

So in Philippians, the second chapter, notice what Paul says at the ninth verse having spoken of Jesus humbling himself and taking on the form of a servant and dying a criminal's death, Paul tells us, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow both things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." When Jesus left this world and was ascended to the right hand of God, as I've told you previously in this series, he did not leave this world a defeated monarch, he did not leave this world thinking Plan A had failed and so we'll go to Plan B and we'll come back later and try to clean up the problems with Plan A. He left this world victorious. He left this world having finished the work that God had given him to do in his first advent. He left this world to take his throne, he did not leave this world because the throne had been denied him. So Paul says that God exalted him and gave him a name that's above every name so that at the name of Jesus, how many knees should bow? Every knee should bow. How many tongues should confess? Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's where we begin tonight, the declaration of the present Lordship and kingly reign of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus himself declared that he had this position and he had this right. Look at Matthew, the 28th chapter, at the 18th verse. It will be well-known to you as the beginning of the Great Commission. Jesus has risen from the dead victorious over death

and now declares in verse 18, Jesus came to them and spake unto them saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." I hope some of you are a little unhappy at this point if you've opened your Bibles and said, "Wait a minute, you can't just cut out some of those words, Dr. Bahnsen. We're whole Bible Christians and you don't have the right to go through there and cut it up." But do you know what? Many Christians do. They may read the words but in practice, in declaration of their profession and what they live out in their lives, they as good as cut out the words that I did to get your attention. Jesus said therefore go to all nations and make disciples not on the basis of the fact that he has authority in heaven but on the basis of the fact that he has authority in heaven and on earth, and that all of it is his. You see, Jesus doesn't send us out, as it were, into the world in the marketplace of ideas just to suggest to people there are a lot of competing lords, give Jesus a chance. That's shameful when evangelicals proclaim that. I don't know if you've seen bumper stickers like that. We have them in Southern California and I just, oh, it makes my back go up whenever I see that, "Give Jesus a chance." Hey, let me tell you, it's the other way around. Pray that Jesus will give you a chance because, you see, he doesn't need to go out there and plead, "There's this lord and that lord, please, you know, pay attention to me as lord." He says here given the resurrection, he has all authority, he has all power in heaven and on earth, and for that reason he says, "Make the nations my disciples." Jesus had the right to call upon us to make the nations his disciples because his heavenly Father had promised that that would be his if he did the work of redemption.

In the second Psalm we read, "Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance in the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Jesus now, do you think he forgot to ask? Do you think Jesus just didn't go to the Father and make that prayer? He says "all power and authority in heaven and on earth is mine. Make the nations my followers, my disciples, and teach them to observe everything that I have commanded you." Everything. Jesus doesn't say, "Go out there and tell them what they want to hear." You know, keep the customer satisfied. He says, "You go and you teach them what I have said and you teach every bit of it. And you know, you can do this, you know that you can accomplish what I've told you to do because I'm going to be with you until the end of the age. And so if I'm with you and all power and authority is mine and I tell you to disciple the nations, it's going to be done." And in the discipling of the nations and teaching them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to teach them to observe his commandments. The Bible teaches that Jesus having done the work of redemption, having died upon the cross was raised powerfully from the dead and ascended on high there to take his throne and to rule over all creation so that all of his commandments would now be followed and every nation made his disciple.

Look at Hebrews, the first chapter, verse 3. The author of Hebrews declares the exaltation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "who being the effulgence of his glory," God's glory, "in the very image of his substance and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." When Jesus finished the priestly work of atonement, he sat down. You need to understand that's very significant in terms of Hebrew ritual in the old covenant system because when the priest sat down, that meant the work was finished.

So Jesus having done the work of purifying our sins, sat down. But where did he sit? He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high and in the 10th chapter of Hebrews we learn what that means, "But he when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God henceforth expecting his enemies to be made the footstool of his feet." When Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, he did so with this one expectation, that God now will bring all of his enemies and subdue them under him, expecting all his enemies to be made the footstool.